

# HOMAGE AND COURTSHIP

(ROMANTIC STIRRINGS OF A YOUNG MAN)



SHADRACH A. AMBANASOM

VISIT...

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*(Romantic Stirrings of a Young Man)*

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Shadrach A. Ambanasom



*Langua Research & Publishing CIG  
Mankon, Bamenda*

Publisher:  
Langa RPCIG  
Langa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group  
P.O. Box 902 Mankon  
Bamenda  
North West Region  
Cameroon  
Langaagrp@gmail.com  
www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed outside N. America by African Books  
Collective  
orders@africanbookscollective.com  
www.africanbookscollective.com

Distributed in N. America by Michigan State  
University Press  
msupress@msu.edu  
www.msupress.msu.edu

ISBN: 9956-616-58-3

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Revised Edition with an Epithalamion

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*The names, characters, places and incidents in this book are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Accordingly, any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely one of incredible coincidence.*

## Contents

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|                                             |              |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Introductory Essay</i> .....             | <i>xi</i>    |
| <i>Preface to the Revised Edition</i> ..... | <i>xvii</i>  |
| <i>Preface to the First Edition</i> .....   | <i>xix</i>   |
| <i>Foreword</i> .....                       | <i>xxiii</i> |

### PART I: HOMAGE

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| ABENDONG .....                    | 3  |
| ONE YEAR OLD .....                | 4  |
| ALMA MATER .....                  | 5  |
| THE RUINED PALACE .....           | 6  |
| THE SKY WEEPS .....               | 8  |
| THE MEDIATORS .....               | 10 |
| 4 WAYS TO DISPATCH YOURSELF ..... | 11 |
| HOARDED IMPRESSIONS .....         | 12 |
| ICON AND BEACON .....             | 13 |
| THE TALENTED THREE .....          | 15 |
| EBANG IROKO .....                 | 17 |
| THE DREADFUL MONSTER.....         | 18 |
| A PLEA FOR MERCY .....            | 20 |
| THE GOLDEN MEAN .....             | 21 |
| THE TALLEST IROKO .....           | 22 |
| THE CHANGED GROVE .....           | 23 |
| CONVERSATION WITH MY HORSE .....  | 24 |
| A WISE DWARF .....                | 25 |

|                                                                     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| BREVITY OF JOY .....                                                | 29 |
| ON LOSING MY HAIR .....                                             | 31 |
| THE HORSE RIDER.....                                                | 32 |
| INDIFFERENT NATURE.....                                             | 33 |
| THE DUDUM CITIZEN .....                                             | 34 |
| THE CAGED LION .....                                                | 35 |
| THE LAST SALUTE .....                                               | 37 |
| ELEMENTAL FURY .....                                                | 38 |
| A GRAIN OF CORN .....                                               | 39 |
| HEALING DREAMS .....                                                | 42 |
| WATCH YOUR APPETITE .....                                           | 45 |
| THE GENUINE SCHOLAR ( <i>To Professor Paul<br/>Mbangwana</i> )..... | 47 |
| ODE TO SABGA HEIGHTS .....                                          | 48 |

## **PART II: COURTSHIP**

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| GO & TELL LADY ZEE .....    | 55 |
| MY SUPERSTELLA .....        | 56 |
| HER SMILES .....            | 57 |
| WE ARE ONE.....             | 58 |
| BEAUTY BEYOND COMPARE ..... | 59 |
| HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY ..... | 60 |
| ON MEETING LADY ZEE .....   | 61 |
| A MOMENT AGO .....          | 62 |
| A UNIVERSAL TYRANT.....     | 64 |
| SHE BRIGHTENS ALL .....     | 66 |



*Homage and Courtship (Romantic Stirrings of a Young Man)*

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| ALL FOR A FACE .....                 | 67 |
| A FRUITFUL VOYAGE .....              | 68 |
| FROM GLOOM TO GLEE .....             | 69 |
| CELLPHONE CONTACT.....               | 71 |
| THE SPITTING COBRA .....             | 72 |
| THE DREAM.....                       | 73 |
| THE BEAST IN MY INSIDE .....         | 75 |
| FUTURE WOMAN OF LETTERS .....        | 77 |
| THE MOSQUITO .....                   | 78 |
| YOU ARE THE BEST .....               | 79 |
| ZEE IS MY MUSE .....                 | 80 |
| THE MUSE IS STILL THERE.....         | 81 |
| HAPPINESS AND SADNESS .....          | 82 |
| BREATH-TAKING BEAUTY .....           | 83 |
| THE NIGHT OF THE NIGHTMARE .....     | 84 |
| LOOK UP IN THE SKY!.....             | 86 |
| ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE.....       | 87 |
| IF I WERE TO HATE MY LADY .....      | 88 |
| TELEPATHY .....                      | 90 |
| LADY ZEE'S REPLY: THE SYMPHONY ..... | 92 |
| EPITHALAMION (ODE TO LADY ZEE).....  | 93 |



Dedicated to my Muse



## Introductory Essay

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SHADRACH Ambanasom's creative pen has once more graced our literary shores with a scintillating collection of sixty-two poems crafted "essentially in a Neo-Romantic mood" and being in the main, "transmutations and commemorations of things, events, and people" the poet holds dear in his life.

The structural pattern of the collection bears witness to this defining sentence given the work's division into two distinct equal parts, titled Part 1 *Homage* (31 poems) and Part 2 *Courtship* ( 31 poems).

Generally, the titles of the parts delineate the broad thematic preoccupations of the collection, but besides questions of honour, tribute and courtship, the poems negotiate the childhood kingdom, the transience of life, technology, nature and nostalgia, among other concerns.

The poems in the first part pay homage to icons and beacons at the family and community levels, to places and to significant milestones in the poet's experience.

Poems like "Abendong", "Icon and Beacon", "The Talented Three", "Ebang Iroko", "The Last Salute", and "A Grain of Corn" deal with the loss of loved ones. Here, the pain of loss, man's helplessness in the face of death, the devastating consequences of death at the personal and communal level are underscored through imagery, allusions, alliterations and repetitions. In most of these poems, the natural environment integrates the poetic experience as a purveyor of mood and attitude.

In "Icon and Beacon", for example, we are told that the passing of Babila John Njingum, has left 'frightened flora and fauna unprotected' and the ENSABIAN landscape is now 'an endangered habitat at the mercy of ogres'.

In these examples, landscape metaphors serve to highlight the frailty of human life in the face of wickedness and determined evil. Furthermore, the structural repetition of it tolls accentuates the music of lament and reinforces the idea of the inevitability of death. In “Abendong”, the messianic stature of Zacharias Abendong in Dudum is emphasised through references to myth and the obvious parallels between this son of the native soil and Jesus Christ. The effect of this man’s demise on the community assumes apocalyptic proportions in the following lines:

Discordant sounded the music of the spheres,  
the sun spun around the other planets,  
graves and tombs stood gaping  
when Zacharias Abendong  
from the world closed his eyes and breathed his last.

The parallels between Abendong and Lucas Achamba of *Son of the Native Soil* fame will not escape the sensitive reader, especially, as the poet discloses the relationship between the writing experiences of both works in the preface to the first edition.

“One Year Old”, “Alma Mater”, “The Ruined Palace”, “The Changed Grove”, and “Ode to Sabga” celebrate events and places dear to the poet. “Alma Mater”, for example, pays tribute to the poet’s alma mater, CPC Bali, one of Anglophone Cameroon’s famed institutions of learning, lifting it above the ordinary run of educational establishments in the country.

We are told in the poem that the college is ‘the rippling pool of bottomless lore,’ ‘a solicitous mother hen,’ ‘pride of our fatherland,’ and ‘trumpeter of hope.’ These metaphors are carefully selected to delineate the stature of CPC and underline the poet’s attitude towards this institution.

“The Dreadful Monster”, “A Plea for Mercy”, “Hoarded Impressions”, “4 Ways to Dispatch Yourself”, and “Indifferent Nature” are philosophical musings on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, growing old, the threat of the nuclear holocaust and the negative effect of excesses of any kind.

“4 Ways to Dispatch Yourself”, in effect, is a humorous jibe at our ‘beer guzzling culture’ with its disastrous effects on those who want to become “famous fuddler(s)”.

There are clear, or metaphorical vectors of, political issues embedded in poems like “The Mediators”, “A Plea For Mercy”, “The Golden Mean”, “The Tallest Iroko”, “The Horse Rider” and “The Mosquito.”

The courtship poems are focalised on Lady Zee, the poet’s Muse, who inspires him to write passionate poetry celebrating her physical and moral excellence. Lady Zee is ‘sans pareil’ because her beauty is natural and untainted as we find in poems like “You are the Best”, “All for a Face”, “Beauty beyond Compare” and “My Superstella.”

We encounter the speaker’s ardent passion for this woman and her effect on him in “Her Smiles”, “We are One”, “On Meeting Lady Zee”, “A Universal Tyrant”, “Breathtaking Beauty”, and “If I were To Hate my Lady”.

What we gather from these poems is that the lover cannot resist loving his beloved and each time passion is remembered, it is celebrated. At another level, romantic love and nature fuse together to highlight the reciprocity of love in “Go and Tell Lady Zee”, “She Brightens All”, “A Moment Ago”, “Telepathy” and, above all, the majestic “Epithalamion” or “Ode to Lady Zee”, that grand, wedding song which appropriately concludes the courtship section.

In “Go and Tell Lady Zee”, for instance, the wind becomes a harbinger of love, a natural messenger who must urgently inform the mistress of the poet’s feelings. In pure romantic overtones, the month of May (when nature is reborn) becomes the month of celebrating reciprocal love

of the kind existing between the poet-persona and his lady. This is romantic in perspective. Repetitions of words and phrases equally signal the urgency of communicating the emotion of love and loyalty to the mistress.

Where love and passion meet, they cannot but call forth desires and wishes for the beloved. One of these aspirations is for her to “become our own Jane Austen” given her “growing interest in [his] songs” and “alert mind on the way to fictional adventure.” This is the dominant idea in “The Dream” and “Future Woman of Letters.” With the mention of Lady Zee in the last stanza of “Ode to Sabga Heights”, we have the beautiful transition from Part One to Part Two of the work. Lady Zee therefore smoothly liaises between homage and courtship.

Ambanasom’s poetic territory is wide, signalling the hybridism of the poet whose effective blending of African and European experiences achieves harmony of thought and technique in the collection. It is in this wise that we discern echoes of oral tradition in “A Wise Dwarf”, ‘reminiscences of the Nigerian Gabriel Okara and Wole Soyinka in “The Sky Weeps” and “On Losing my Hair”, respectively.

Tennysonian, Spenserian, Shakespearean, Wordsworthian, Donnean and Blakean parallels are observable in “The Last Salute”, “The Dream”, “Her Smiles”, “The Mosquito”, “The Horse Rider”, “Telepathy” and “The Caged Lion”. All these influences give the poetry both an African and a global appeal in these times when our destinies are unmistakably assuming multicultural dimensions.

The richness of a poem, C. K. Stead has told us, is heightened by the appropriate use of words to expose mood and atmosphere. In this collection, Ambanasom inserts the appropriate word for the appropriate emotion, using images to clothe his thought, images assembled from things actually seen and intimately known. In addition, the poetry achieves



music and rhythm through diction, alliteration, repetition, assonance and the rhythmic cadence of the structure of some of the poems. This, to my mind, constitutes the forte of the poetry.

**By Eunice Ngongkum (PhD), is Senior Lecturer,  
Department of African Literature, University of Yaoundé 1**

(This essay, only slightly updated, was initially a review that first appeared in *The Post* No. 0992 of Monday, October 6, 2008 page 8)



## Preface to the Revised Edition

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The revised edition is substantially a reprint of the first with a few corrections here and there. Twelve new poems have been added, that is, three under *Homage* and nine under *Courtship*. In other words Part I now contains thirty-one poems and Part II thirty-one poems, both making a total of sixty-two poems. However, the most significant innovations are Lady Zee's reply and the consequent 'Epithalamion' ('Ode to Lady Zee'), the longest poem in the collection, and a logical conclusion to the courtship poems. Since the ultimate goal of a typical courtship is marriage, nothing could be more fitting than a grand, nuptial song to crown the romantic efforts of the poet – persona who has been wooing his beloved in a series of amoretti (little loves or cupids) for several years.

Going through the poems in this collection, students of English or African literature will surely notice the multiplicity of literary influences on me, one of them being the work of Edmund Spenser, the great English Renaissance poet, after whose 'Epithalamion' mine is only roughly modelled. Spenser himself had patterned his own epithalamion on those of the ancients, for the writing of wedding songs is an old poetic tradition. The practice has a pedigree going back to antiquity and its iconic figures like Pindar, Sappho, Theocritus (Greek), Catullus (Roman), and the relatively modern Ronsard (French).

My love for English poetry dates as far back as the late nineteen seventies when I was an external undergraduate in the University of London. At that time I was only one of the many foreign students from far-flung countries like Belize, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, China, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and the West Indies, etc. But the bulk of the external students came from South-East Asia

and the Chinese sub-continent with those intriguing, emphatic three-syllabic names like Wao Ching Tao, Konglim Tar etc.

At the end of each year the University of London came out with an annual evaluative report on students' performances. In one report without mentioning me by name, but in an obvious gesture of positive reinforcement, it referred to my fresh response to a question on Edmund Spenser's poetry in which I had quoted part of my own sonnet inspired by the English author. That sonnet is 'Her Smiles.'

Many years later, I told myself that if, as an undergraduate, I had made an impression on the University of London Examination Board with just a fragment of a poem, then I could put together some of the other poems I had since written to see whether or not they were publishable. The rest of the story is contained in the Preface to the First Edition.

With the inclusion of the espousal ode (Epithalamion), consequent upon Lady Zee's reply, 'The Symphony,' the revised edition, as it now stands, is more complete in a way that the first was not.

**Shadrach A. Ambanasom**

**Bambili – Bamenda, Cameroon, October 2009**

## Preface to the First Edition

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When a writer in his fifties publishes a work with the rather curious sub-title: 'Romantic Stirrings of a Young Man,' he owes the reading public a little explanation because, except in spirit, such a man can no longer be regarded as a youth. Accordingly, it is safe to say that most of the poems in this volume belong to my youthful past, with the earliest poem, 'A Wise Dwarf,' dating as far back as 1974, the year I enrolled as an external undergraduate in the University of London to read English through the correspondence course, known now as distance education. By 1981, the year I left Cameroon for postgraduate studies in Ohio University, Athens, Ohio (U.S.A.), nearly all the poems in Part I: *Homage*, my novel, *Son of the Native Soil*, and some of the poems in Part II: *Courtship*, had been written. The remaining poems under 'Courtship' continued to be written alongside the polishing of the novel until the revised edition of the latter in October 2006.

The main character of the novel is Achamba, a young man in his early thirties who is courting the text's heroine, Echunjei. The 'courtship' poems were thus written in the spirit of the hero wooing the heroine. Ultimately, however, these poems, constructed essentially in a Neo-Romantic mood, are the transmutation and commemoration of things, events, and people I hold dear in my life.

But how the poems came to be assembled as a collection is the consequence of the commingling of a peculiar set of literary circumstances at the centre of which was Professor John N. Nkengasong, of the English Department, University of Yaoundé I and President of the Anglophone Creative Writers' Association, (ACWA). Under his dynamic impetus, many Anglophone Cameroonian creative works have been published with the help of subvention from the Ministry of

Culture. Since I had not benefitted from the largesse of the Ministry of Culture for the simple reason that I had never applied for financial assistance, Professor Nkengasong was constantly urging me to do so, and would not take 'no' for an answer.

He was never satisfied whenever I said I had no unpublished creative work to submit to the Ministry of Culture for consideration. He accorded me an unusual welcome when I was in Yaoundé recently: 'Hi Prof, before I welcome you to Yaoundé, let me remind you that you have to send something to the Ministry of Culture for possible publication.' That was in August 2006 when I went down to Yaoundé in connection with a Ph.D. defence.

Thereafter I gave his 'importunity' serious thought. Then lately, I had a sudden flash of insight; I landed on the idea of the poems of my youth and those inspired by the young man in my novel. I put them together and sent them to Professor Nkengasong, asking him to see whether or not they were worth sending to the Ministry, and his answer was positive. And so, here they are.

Of course I am well aware that the poems may not find favour with some critics because they do not carry a readily perceptible 'political punch,' the criterion fashionable these days in some Anglophone quarters for the conferment of the seal of relevance to literature. My humble opinion in this regard is that important and central as politics is in our corporate existence, it should not be the one and only subject matter of our literature. In any case it is not given to just any writer to produce genuinely good political literature. May those capable of pursuing more vigorous committed writing do so; may our radical visionaries bloom. But let there be room for liberal humanists too. The Anglophone story can be told in many ways. To prescribe only politics and proscribe any other subject matter would be to kill our creative spirit, to stultify our imaginative efforts and to truncate our literature.

Although we are a people with a problem, a fact that calls for the accentuation of our condition of marginality, and although when our creative works are examined globally many of us can qualify as committed writers, we do differ in our degree of commitment. Some, because of their heightened level of ideological development, are more engaged, more radical than others. But the dynamism, the vibrancy of Anglophone Cameroon literature cannot be fostered by a spirit that encourages a straitjacket mentality. Neither monolithism nor orthodoxy can be a viable way of life in a world as diverse and complex as ours today.

Just as we meet among the motley crowd in the street the Manichean binarism of the tall and the short, the young and the old, the beautiful and the ugly, the calm and the violent, the radical and the moderate, so do we expect our literature to signalize this diversity in its various forms. Pierre Fandio captures this spirit of our imaginative writing very well when, in an interview with Bate Besong, he affirms that Anglophone Cameroon literature is ‘at the same time piercing, incisive, tender, soothing and controversial.’ And that is how it should be.

Indeed, as it exists today, our literature reveals a reality we cannot escape from but one that literary critics should rather begin to appreciate: a growth in various directions, a diversity in themes, styles and attitudes, encompassing a wider spectrum of human emotion which is all the more realistic. It is in this context that one can situate *Homage and Courtship*; for it expands the range of human emotion in our literature. Therefore, its publication needs no further justification than that it represents an aspect of the wide-ranging, realistic growth of Anglophone Cameroon literature that objective literary critics must now begin to address.

**Shadrach A. Ambanasom**

**Bambili, Bamenda, Cameroon, July 2007**





## Foreword

---

The great subjects of poetry, William Wordsworth wrote, are “the essential passions of the heart” and “the great and simple affections.” Consequently, the poet does not become a mere practitioner of artistic craft whose intention is to satisfy the refined taste of a literary connoisseur but one whose “true voice of feeling” as John Keats puts it, is aimed at developing man mentally, physically and spiritually. These views by Wordsworth and Keats (who are among the five major English Romanticists) are indeed the pillars and the heart of Romantic poetry and which, of course, has influenced the Romantic tradition for centuries.

Such palpable influence, whether consciously or unconsciously, is in many ways evident in Shadrach A. Ambanasom’s collection of poems titled *Homage and Courtship: Romantic Stirrings of a Young Man*. As the title suggests, the poems are divided into two parts. Part One of the poems pays tribute to patriots and heroes, famous writers, heritage sites, and the natural environment, while Part Two explores the various shades of emotional experience with a beloved who in the poems is identified with the unique figure of Lady Zee. Although the dominant trend in the collection is homage and courtship, the poet expresses concern for other issues like nostalgia or the reminiscences of youth, the passage of time, the brevity of joy, and the human predicament.

The striking force of the poems lies in the intriguing relationship between romanticism and romance. Ambanasom’s romanticism is concerned with the concept of nature as a universal being or a cosmic entity, nostalgia, the attempt to link his childhood with the present and the future, and the response to nature at different levels of his development. The poet also demonstrates a penchant for

rural subject matter, places and people. In the poet of romance there is a more direct expression of basic human emotions, in particular of love that is enchanting, possessing, seductive, and alluring. We find in the poems, love that is reciprocal and imbued with constancy and understanding.

The poet's fascination for Lady Zee is exceeding. Lady Zee becomes the symbol of beauty, a celebration of beauty. She appears in almost all the poems dealing with courtship as an example of exquisite beauty, or to use the poet's expression "beauty beyond compare". She is to the poet "my lily", "my goddess", "my idol", "my superstella", a summation of Greek and African gods and goddesses. She is the woman whose smiles are capable of transforming sadness to joy, and dullness to liveliness. She is the woman who bridges the gap between romance and romanticism because with her there is a fulfilled union with the rest of the universe including the stars and the clouds. Indeed, in the poet's vision she is the "queen of the universe", an embodiment of all that is glorifying in the universe.

The poems, therefore, articulate a variety of genuine feelings and sublime emotions expressed with sturdy imagery, potent symbolism, and the resonance of sound and rhythm which create a staccato effect in the verse. Of course, the reader will find the poems not only pleasurable to read but will also participate emotionally, intellectually and spiritually in the rich experiences of romance and romanticism that overflow the banks of the poet's imagination.

**John Nkemngong Nkengasong**  
**Writer and Critic University of Yaounde 1**

## ABENDONG

Discordant sounded the music of the spheres;  
the sun spun around the other planets;  
graves and tombs stood gaping, devoid of their  
shrouded lodgers; and Harmony onto  
Chaos and Melancholy ceded his  
cherished throne when Zacharias Abendong  
from the world closed his eyes and breathed his last.

Compared to the sustained lamentation  
that rose from the souls of Dudum people  
to the heavens above and moved the angels,  
Niobe over her beloved six sons and six daughters,  
merely sighed when the incensed god  
put them to death, and Aeneas never wept  
at all when his lover, Dido, he lost.

Darkness and chaos hold sway  
over the doomed Dudum folk who  
grope about and break their necks for  
want of light since forever their sun has set.  
In their anguish and misery, they curse the  
hand that dealt the fatal blow  
which left them without a leader.

Wild and deformed have since grown flowers  
in his garden, which lacking his tender care,  
have followed more the barbaric course  
than that for which he'd intended them.  
Their ugly shapes would draw tears  
even from the hardest of hardened hearts.

## ONE YEAR OLD

When, with the consent of Hymen,  
I broke through my spouse's defense line  
and led in my invading army,  
she suffered a great loss.

But that deity soon negotiated a truce,  
and sent us a female olive tree.  
Since then, we have lived in peace,  
and that peace is now a year old.

Today, we are watering the olive tree  
with precious mineral water  
so that it may grow healthy and sturdy,  
for upon its health depends ours.

Tree of peace, grow and survive us!  
Much have you done to keep us  
at Hymen's holy shrine,  
and much there is to be done still  
if intact must remain our conjugal knot.

## **ALMA MATER**

Far from jarring rustic noise,  
and nestled in a green meadow  
within the precincts of savanna hills,  
you are the rippling pool  
of bottomless lore imbibed  
by the favoured few.

A solicitous mother-hen,  
under your protective wings  
congregate your tender brood  
to whom you dispense norm, care and love,  
with malice towards none,  
but with charity for all.

Pride of our fatherland,  
your name forever is writ in gold,  
and for years to come  
you will remain the fortress of culture,  
a citadel sought by many,  
but a haven attained by a few.

Trumpeter of hope, each year  
you proclaim tidings of success,  
you bring joy and mirth to many a home,  
you reconcile child, mother and father,  
helping, thus, to make stronger  
what God has put together:  
the nucleus of the nation!

## THE RUINED PALACE

For heaven's sake mason  
touch not the broken brick;  
nor the sagging ceiling;  
no, not even the mossy windows  
through which is heard the sad song  
of the wailing, whistling wind.  
Leave them as they are.

Leave the mossy, tiled roof  
dripping with water  
from the misty eye of the sky.  
Disturb not the colony of the feathered tribe  
in their snug niche beneath the roof.  
Leave them alone, leave them.

Let the spiral staircase,  
broken as it is, remain as it is.  
Add neither nail nor wood;  
leave the balustrade rough and rickety.  
Add neither polish nor paint.  
Leave them as they are, leave them.

You kill in curing the wound,  
but leaving him flayed,  
you give the patient long life.  
Graft not poison onto his body.  
Leave the Palace in its state of decay.  
The ruins speak of greater beauty  
than you know of;  
they speak of the glory of the past;  
they speak of an age  
that is all but smothered  
by a botched civilization,  
drowning the ceremony of innocence.

In its mourning garb  
the Palace is weeping to quit  
an alien century whose values  
have gone awry, with the ineluctable  
advance of crimes, chaos and greed.  
Lift not, lift not the fallen stone.  
Leave it, yes, leave it alone.

## **THE SKY WEEPS**

It weeps,  
the sky weeps outside;  
it weeps with the soft soothing sound  
of the gentle pre-dawn rain  
as it drops lightly on plantain leaves,  
invoking the yester-years of my life,  
while snug in bed I muse.

And they flow,  
the early years of my life roll on;  
they come rushing with a fascinating  
vista, teasing me to follow  
a young man  
on a sentimental trip  
down a rusty path of the past.

And they flow,  
the days of my past roll on;  
they come unfolding  
a compelling scenery,  
cajoling me to join a teenager  
on a safari tour of the past.

Oh yes, they come,  
the early days of my life roll on;  
they come beckoning me  
to follow a toddler  
on an emotional journey  
down memory lane.

Still it weeps;  
the sky continues to weep outside;  
it weeps with the mellow music



and the insistent rhythm  
of the August morning rain,  
summoning the yester-years of my life,  
while abed I'm lost in reverie.

Then away with my alter egos I fly;  
I fly away with them.  
I fly from the harsh present;  
I flee to seek solace in my ivory tower,  
cuddled in the warm bosom of my grand mother.

## THE MEDIATORS

When the new dance arrived,  
so tempting and intoxicating was  
the rhythm of its music that  
the people went wild with excitement.

So the new musicians beat their instruments  
and the people danced in the cities  
and they danced in the provinces  
and they danced in the villages  
to the rhythm of this fresh music.

But skeptics and cynics only sneered  
at the new dancers who, they said,  
were mere experts in adulteration,  
putting an end to the high old standards  
of their original rhythm.

Now when musicians play a synthetic tune,  
and the living respond with complex steps  
to the rhythm of soul-elevating melody,  
I dance in my heart,  
and you dance in your heart,  
and we all dance in our hearts  
because we are the flexible mediators  
of the past and the present,  
and hence we are the survivors.

## **4 WAYS TO DISPATCH YOURSELF**

First do not waste time with any Fanta.  
You would become but a water drinker.  
This is a drink fit only for women  
And not meant to touch the lips of pure men.

Secondly with water now discarded,  
You should start with palm wine concentrated.  
To do this, quaff large jugs of dry potent  
Palm wine possessing superior content.

Thirdly, you should guzzle beer or bellevie  
For satisfaction and great energy!  
Again let these be in huge quantities.  
Pay attention to their high qualities.

Fourthly, for quick results, neglect your health  
And drain shorts of gin, ignoring your death  
For what signifies a little blunder  
If you can become a famous fuddler?

## HOARDED IMPRESSIONS

They are tender elephant grass  
cropped and roughly chewed  
by the evening goat  
and stored in the stomach  
for later pleasant cud-chewing.

They are red wines and spirits  
brewed with care but stowed away  
in the deep cellars,  
that grow in strength and taste  
with the passage of time.

They are carved works of art,  
fashioned with care and skill,  
cheaper when new,  
but that grow in value and beauty  
with the passage of time.

They are sweet seductive dreams  
by the fireside  
when we have grown hoarse and grey,  
when an old tune rekindles in us  
sensations sweet and a return to the past,  
since they are now few and far between.

Such are our hoarded impressions  
that grow sweeter with the passage of time:  
these are our childhood recollections  
that become more precious  
the closer we get to our sunset.

## ICON AND BEACON

Our brilliant icon and beacon,  
our candle is out!

An ENSABIAN iroko has fallen,  
leaving frightened flora and fauna unprotected;  
the ENSAB landscape has thus diminished,  
becoming an endangered habitat at the mercy of ogres.

Our brilliant icon and beacon,  
our candle is out!

Like sheep without shepherd,  
we grope about in the dark;  
for a glory has vanished from the face of our earth.

This doom, our gloom, means that  
we are not likely to see again,  
for a long time to come,  
the likes of Babila John Njingum.

Our brilliant icon and beacon,  
our candle is out!

Oh yes, a visionary splendour  
has faded away from the face of Bali land,  
for Bah Njingum has made his final bow,  
his exit, and left for that distant country  
whose border none can twice traverse.

But in departing,  
Dr. Babila has left us a strange parcel;  
he has bequeathed to us  
bizarre goods parcelled in  
parched tongues, drawn faces and tearful eyes.

Willy-nilly, sooner or later,  
dear mourners, brothers and sisters,  
it will be our turn  
to answer our final call.

But will you and I be found  
worthy by Him who created us all?  
Let us meditate on that.  
Death is the unique factor that,  
despite laurel wreath or wealth,  
levels us all.

Ask not, therefore, for whom the bell tolls.  
It tolls not for him alone;  
it tolls for you;  
it tolls for me;  
it tolls for all of us,  
the tragic fate of humanity.

Our brilliant icon and beacon,  
our candle is out!

## THE TALENTED THREE

They came,  
they dazzled,  
they mesmerized  
and, like meteorites,  
they have vanished in a flash.

Yes, Bate Besong, Ambe and Gwangwa'a,  
Anglophone luminaries  
of the dramatic art, have  
concluded their noble act on the stage of life.

They came,  
they dazzled,  
they mesmerized  
but, above all,  
they shocked all.

Yes, BB, Ambe and Gwangwa'a,  
Anglophone dramatic icons,  
have left the stage with a bang!  
And what a bang!

Yes, BB bowed out with a bang  
when, in the company of his  
comrades in death, at Edea,  
he left us in a dramatic flash  
in the sad hour of the collision of the  
titanic twain, with a twist of tragic irony.

Oh yes, they came,  
they dazzled,  
they mesmerized,  
but the talented three shocked us

when, within a split second,  
they bowed to death,  
leaving behind but their  
decapitated bodies, with their brains  
scattered in the wind to inspire humanity.  
'A terrible beauty is born.'



## **EBANG IROKO**

The Ebang iroko has fallen,  
leaving frightened flora and fauna unprotected;  
the Ebang landscape has diminished,  
becoming an endangered habitat at the mercy of all.

Our brilliant icon and beacon,  
our candle is out.  
Like sheep without shepherd,  
we grope about in the dark;  
for a glory has vanished  
from the face of our earth.

The gloom, the doom, means that the benighted Ebang  
folk are not likely to see again  
the likes of our beloved departed  
for a long time to come.

Oh yes, a visionary splendour  
has faded away from the face of our earth;  
for M.A. Asenek has made  
his exit, his final bow, and left for the distant country  
whose border none can twice traverse,  
bequeathing to us bizarre goods  
parceled in parched tongues  
drawn faces and tearful eyes.

But sooner or later, willy-nilly  
dear brothers and sisters,  
it will be our turn  
to answer our final call;  
for such is the unique factor  
that, despite laurel wreath or wealth, levels us all.

## THE DREADFUL MONSTER

Let us not talk of yesterday  
sweet and palatable though it was  
but which now is a dream  
vanished at the dawn of today,  
and today a skeletal present  
full of aching hearts  
and sore, wasted bodies,  
bodies that barely breathe  
while they live in their yester-years.

Let us dwell but on today's anguish  
when a giant with a deadly cudgel  
bestrides the globe and  
bludgeons to death mankind's brightest;  
when a merciless monster  
is on the rampage  
causing havoc and global carnage,  
and with a cold, deadly touch devastates  
homes and decimates villages,  
leaving in his wake pungent putrid flesh and  
threatening the extinction of our dusky race.

Let us talk of today's eternal,  
solemn toll of funeral bells  
and the mournful dirges and elegies  
one hears everywhere  
or the endless funeral processions  
and the countless coffins and floral caskets  
one beholds here and there,  
making undertakers, for mere lucre, believe  
happy days are here to stay.

Let us talk of today's solution,  
for in today's talk lies tomorrow's hope.  
Let us talk of how to contain this ogre  
and chase away grief from the heart  
and wipe away tears from the eyes  
and rekindle a smile  
on the orphan's face  
and restore hope to humanity.

## **A PLEA FOR MERCY**

Within a second at your decision  
we will all cease to be God's own creation.  
The whole world now exists at your mercy.  
We earnestly pray for your sympathy.

Like two titans of equal lethal power  
with mortal blows you threaten each other.  
May God stop you from pressing those buttons  
that would put an end to man's existence.

God's flood nonetheless spared a faithful Noah,  
but your mortal blow would spare not 'un noir',  
since whether from the cold East to the West  
or from Uncle Sam's West to the cold East,  
not safe is our in-between continent.

Do not wipe out with deadly nuclear power  
what God vowed not to destroy with water,  
sealing that divine oath with a rainbow.  
If in God you trust, then to Him stoop low!  
For before God every nation shall bow.

## THE GOLDEN MEAN

When Belzebub blew his fiery trumpet,  
all his legion rose in arms against God  
and they're now trapped in an infernal net;  
so are many a brave African god.  
There are always present some radical  
elements in each human society.  
Change, unless rational and practical,  
often threatens public security.  
However, in order that 'one smash hit'  
leads not the world astray, change we all need.  
But gradually we have to effect it  
if we defend stability indeed.  
Chaos is born of radicalism;  
darkness, off-spring of conservatism.

## **THE TALLEST IROKO**

In the centre of a forest I stand.  
Giant of all greenness, I permit no  
other tree to share my height, none at all.  
For sustenance I dally not on the  
shallow surface of the earth but drive deep  
my powerful tap root to the earth's centre.

By sending deep my tap root I have since  
discovered with joy what layers of soil  
lie hidden in the bowels of the earth  
rather than follow 'wise advice' and die  
unnoticed on the bankrupt, dry surface,  
the realm of herbs, shrubs and common flower.

Tortuous is the way my root passes through;  
sometimes it breaks through rocks and waddles through  
mud; but it oft wades through healthy water.  
Occasionally, it stumbles over  
and sustains a dislocation but picks  
itself up with buoyancy and goes on.

The deeper it goes the more exquisite  
the food obtained; my appetite is  
not cloyed by over sweetness,  
for sweeter sweetness comes with deeper depth.  
Because of the quality of my diet,  
I have become the tallest Iroko.  
Even as I speak, my root is at work  
to make me still the tallest Iroko.

## THE CHANGED GROVE

Beloved grove of my wandering infancy  
with a heavy heart I return to you,  
a grief-stricken grown-up in search of some  
clues to unearth comforting memories of  
a past that is from me forever gone.

'Tis hard to say how often I roved here  
as an unbridled, carefree pre-school lad.  
I had measured out my youthful life with  
countless rural walks along the verdurous  
paths of this memorable childhood haunt.

But oh how changed! Oh how different it is  
from that of yest' years clad in rich foliage.  
Gone are some of the trees that on this spot  
stood with leafy shade as a canopy  
over this once dappled path, my tho'oughfare.  
Partly gone is the green and dovetailed vault  
which would shut the sky from my curious eye.

Everything I knew is either now dead  
or has passed from green to maturity.  
I'm no exception, growing from a thoughtless  
youth to a pensive adult who hears in  
the howling wind among the trees above  
my head, the mournful moaning of mankind.

## CONVERSATION WITH MY HORSE

‘My nimble courser how swiftly you fly!  
Quickly have I attained eight and twenty  
but when I look back at the doors passed by  
no laurels for him soon to be thirty;  
Keats, Byron and Shelley all reached their height  
ere to this door you brought them, who died young.  
At door twenty-eight I’ve got to alight  
but my host to entertain with no good song.’  
«My green rider, know that many a bard  
can yet be made beyond an early door;  
some, like you, must first labour very hard,  
though gifted others in this are not poor.  
Few are the troubadours born geniuses,  
but many are transmuted by themselves.»



## A WISE DWARF

Long ago, far back in history,  
so we are told according to the story,  
there lived a famous Fon in Dudum.  
His name, as we are told, was Fon Ukum.

Happily did Ukum rule over his people.  
He was the coiner of many a riddle.  
Never defeated in an argument,  
Fon Ukum was wise in his judgment.

People called him second King Solomon.  
By this sub-title he was all over known.  
But did Ukum this epithet deserve?  
No answer but my comment I reserve.

Then Fon Ukum soon received a shock  
when his subjects him began to mock  
that there was a man wiser than the Fon.  
But this was not Ukum's idea of fun.

Who could be this man wiser than the king?  
Except for one gift he wasn't worth a thing.  
He was Ayari, the dwarf in size;  
it seemed he was born only to be wise.

When he heard this, Fon Ukum became angry,  
for he had never dreamed of such a story.  
He was determined to defeat this man.  
So Ukum went ahead to invent a plan.

Yes, there once lived a dwarf in Dudum.  
He was well known for his wisdom  
in answering any hard question.

To disgrace him was the Fon's intention.  
Ayari was the Fon's head to shave  
if he considered himself wise and brave.  
To the palace he was called one day,  
and for his job he was offered no pay.

But let us leave here our famous Fon  
and talk more about a dwarf's son.  
For his plan Ayari roasted some corn  
while the attendants blew the Fon's horn.

Ayari the dwarf knew the Fon's aim  
and was bent on destroying the Fon's fame.  
Many curious people were there that day  
to witness the dwarf have his say.

Ayari gave the Fon some corn to eat  
while His Highness' head he shaved on his feet.  
And when the Fon's head he had shaved,  
the Fon his corn had consumed.

Then the Fon laughed at the wise man  
who had been caught in the Fon's plan.  
'Make my hair stand on its old spot  
if in shaving you are a good shot.'

All the people praised the Fon's wisdom;  
yes, all the subjects in his fondom.  
'Put back my grains of corn in their old place  
if you're the wise Fon of this palace,'  
Ayari retorted in the Fon's face.

All were sad that the Fon was conquered  
by a dwarf they thought had blundered.  
The Fon was distressed and gloomy

as he went about sullen and moody.  
He vowed not to bite a morsel  
until the dwarf he could muzzle.  
He then began another strategy  
to salvage his damaged dignity.

Meanwhile our dwarf had returned to his hut,  
feeling satisfied and unhurt.  
Many to admire him there went,  
yes, to a house not better than a tent.

Let us now return to the Fon's second plan,  
for truly he was an ill-fated man.  
A he-goat was what he gave the pigmy,  
and to nurse it well would be his duty.

He charged the midget with these words:  
'In the future you'll bring me its young ones.'  
The dwarf could be seen on the road  
as he walked home with the royal goat.

All the time he thought of the Fon's plan  
and then knew what to do, this wise man.  
To humiliate the Fon was his aim  
and destroy forever the Fon's fame.  
How can the Fon give me a he-goat  
and expect young ones from such a beast?  
How can young ones be produced by a male  
unless such an animal is female?

Then Ayari went ahead to work,  
for he was not your common jerk.  
So he began to cut a log of wood  
that would be his answer, and it was good.  
Now the peeved Fon happened to pass by

and so he asked Ayari the dwarf why  
he was hacking off the dead branch of wood.  
I say Ayari's response was good.

This is what he said to the king:  
'My Lord, I am cutting this thing  
because I want to relieve my father  
who is labouring to be delivered.'

Sneering, the Fon thundered, 'Oh my wise man,  
how can a child be born by a man?',  
stupidly forgetting his he-goat,  
let every reader of this take note.

Now listen to the dwarf's crushing answer.  
He truly proved himself a man wiser:  
'If a man can't bear forth children,  
why expect young ones from your he-goat then?'

To talk of Fon Ukum's ignominy  
would need more space and another story  
which I have no time to tell.  
Readers, here ends my simple tale.

## **BREVITY OF JOY**

One gloomy afternoon when low-spirited,  
I know not why,  
my soul to cheer with music  
I decided, and Paul Mauriat was my artist.

And when his instrumental liquid notes  
on my ears began to drop,  
I was transported on the wings of Fancy  
to the land of blissful ease.

There, my friends and relatives came,  
tumbling around me.  
In various moods they fell:  
the quick and the dead,  
some accusing and weeping,  
others clinging onto me,  
and refusing to let me go.

Never to quit that land I vowed.  
Gradually, the clime changed:  
The seasons, vegetation and the fauna,  
like the people, lazily passed by,  
vying with one another for a place in my soul.

But while I was thus contented  
with them to dwell forever,  
behold stark reality struck!  
And a sudden electronic click I heard.

And then, the people and the birds,  
the trees and the animals,  
the clime and the vegetation,

were at a standstill,  
and a moment later, all disappeared,  
leaving my soul swelling with sensations sweet  
and a mind musing on the brevity of joy.

## ON LOSING MY HAIR

In vain pages of journals  
have I turned over and over.  
Bootless some scientific annals  
perused with anxiety and in anger  
in an attempt to discover  
the treatment for a balding head.

Fruitless my efforts with doctors  
(personal contact or letters)  
to halt the insidious invaders  
of my receding forehead.

While pondering over this at home one day  
I raised my drooping head and  
saw near me Julius Caesar of Rome  
with little hair on his own head  
but gallant green laurels he wore instead  
which have since immortalised him.

Close behind Caesar stood Shakespeare  
the great English dramatic poet,  
whose crown was bereft of hair,  
but garlanded with green leaves.

Inspiration I drew from this pair:  
Never to while away useful time  
in talking away all my hair,  
but labouring hard on my books  
so that, like theirs, when my hair  
falls off, laurels take its place,  
in spite of wrinkles and lost looks.

## THE HORSE RIDER

Majestic bronze horse, stiff-necked must he be  
who, passing near-by, would not cast on you  
a second glance;  
what masterpiece is here  
displayed to feast the eyes of art lovers!

On your back is a brave bronze rider,  
on his left flank a thick-jewelled scabbard,  
and a raised and poised spear in his right  
hand, about to pin down,  
I know not, what tyrant.

Happy is the dauntless Bamoun warrior  
borne by such a peerless, dazzling stallion.  
Rearing on your stout hindlegs,  
with your graceful forelegs in the air,  
you seem ready to vault over  
a perilous fence.

Tell me, magic horse, where you're flying to  
with this intrepid fighter.  
Who is it that has incensed his anger?  
I will call your rider Prometheus unchained;  
I will also call him Toussaint L'Ouverture,  
sent to liberate mankind chafing in bondage.



## INDIFFERENT NATURE

When the hungry vagrant got to the mango-tree,  
its branches were drooping with full load,  
and ripe mangoes emitted a fragrance  
that watered his mouth and  
kept murmuring bees buzzing busily.

Instinct drew him to the ripe and juicy fruit.  
And with his hunger's edge blunted, he now saw  
that among the ripe mangoes that lay under  
the tree were fruit with bleeding stalks.

But there had been no wind,  
and no storm had invaded the tree  
when both ripe and green fell,  
an act of indifferent Nature.

If the ripest must fall first, as they say,  
how come the untimely fall of the green fruit  
whose stalks were yet fresh with life's latex  
fit to rebuff the buffets of life?

Shaken was the pensive tramp  
by the conclusions of his musings:  
His own precarious existence, he perceived,  
was an accident in the palm of inscrutable Nature.

## THE DUDUM CITIZEN

The flowers that bloom at dawn and die at noon  
warn us of the passing time since our birth,  
how at our journey's end we are all soon  
to arrive to bow down before cold death.  
The plants that rot leave behind a few seeds  
to multiply and continue their kind.  
All humans count among their various needs  
the strong desire to propagate mankind.  
The beautiful rose dies that is healthy  
but is not heard of if it leaves no trace  
to show to the world its glorious beauty  
that would have been the subject of much praise.  
The clean, productive Dudum citizen  
who dies, even poor, won't be forgotten.

## THE CAGED LION

He was her pet lion.  
Like a kitten she nurtured him,  
feeding him with crumps of meat  
from her own hand, the harmless cub  
she had picked up in the park  
when his parents by a poacher had been shot.

He grew up with her other pets  
and with her kitten and lap-dogs.  
The young naturalist fed him from her  
own china; but as he grew into a bigger  
lion, the European blonde  
could not take chances.  
So in her iron cage she confined him.

There she fed him with rats, moles and beef;  
for though domesticated, he remained  
true to his nature; blood and not herbs  
was his native diet, and on that he lived.  
Thrice a day the woman fed him for  
many years-morn, noon and eve.

The African villagers admired her skill  
in handling the tame lion as he voraciously  
devoured his meal with a smouldering,  
terrifying fire in his eyes.  
Then it happened: one fateful eve  
the blonde was found gored to death near the cage  
with the lion at large.

Don't go searching for this lion in the wild.  
In vain would you find him there;  
for there is one in each man.

Each man nurses in his inside  
his own domesticated lion,  
his own smouldering fire,  
caged up by norms, lore and mores.  
Fear then, the fire in each man!  
Beware of each man's caged lion!

## THE LAST SALUTE

In his early days  
he had won souls for his Creator.  
To conclude in style the task he had begun,  
he was determined to live.  
Alas! that job he never lived to complete.

On his sick-bed, a sinister shadow  
could be discerned creeping steadily  
over his afflicted body, and gradually  
overrunning a terrain that was ours.

When he had to put to sea,  
David Achomba ordered the oars be cleaned  
and his boat unmoored  
before he went down into it  
with no remorse expressed.

Down the gently flowing river,  
that noble fellow was borne  
in the incense-perfumed vessel  
heading for the distant land  
whose boundary none can twice traverse.

With an up-raised hand, in a final salute,  
and with godlike grit,  
he shed no tears,  
he voiced no curse,  
he expressed no fears  
when he finally crossed the bourn.

On the misty shore we stood, lead-footed,  
with bleeding hearts,  
partially blinded by salty water.  
And with a mutilated dirge,  
we shuffled home, drenched by tears from a weeping sky.

## **ELEMENTAL FURY**

When I hear the rain pounding on my roof  
and then pattering on the window pane,  
when the trees swing in the dark,  
and creak under the force of the storm,  
I fear the forces of nature are around.

When lightning flashes and thunder roars  
and men fall down to avoid the blow,  
when a thunderbolt breaks the ribs of men  
and dismembers them limb by limb,  
I fear the elements of fury are unchained.

When I hear in the howling of the wind  
and in the drumming of Dudum Falls  
the wailing of bereaved mothers,  
and the groan of separated lovers,  
I fear the agents of doom are at large.

Then secure in my world within  
I reinforce my doors and thank  
my ancestors for the calm  
that reigns in my homestead,  
invoking them to instill in my  
slumbering inmates and me sounder sleep  
so that we may know nothing  
of the elemental fury  
that has gripped the world without.

## **A GRAIN OF CORN**

Bernard Ambanasom, my son Bernard,  
your untimely death  
shook and shattered the very depth  
of my existence, knocking down, for a while,  
the pillars of my faith.

Since then my life has never been the same.  
But, thanks to God's healing power, my  
faith in Him was rekindled and reinforced.  
And now, in the Lord, my faith again is strong.

Bernard, my son, ten years have gone by  
since you departed from us.  
Ten years have rolled on  
since you succumbed to the  
lethal weapon of a traitor.

Oh murder most foul and most traitorous!  
Murder most heinous and unspeakable!  
Yes, sonny, you were cut down by  
the treacherous weapon of  
one in whose care you had been entrusted,  
one in whose custody you felt most secure.

Alas, my son, that traitor, your school teacher!  
A man may smile and smile,  
and yet be a devil!  
Cruel man, your name is villainy.

Bernard, my son, ten years have passed on  
and you are still with us.  
Indeed, you will never die.  
So long as we breathe God's serene air,  
so long as we draw sustenance

from His bountiful earth,  
so long as we plant and we harvest,  
so long as we consume and propagate  
your eternal grain of corn,  
you will continue to live with us.

Precocious son of the soil,  
unknown to you, at the tender age of 8  
you had sown the seed of your immortality.  
Oh yes, Bernie, thanks to that  
brown grain of corn planted by your  
innocent hand in our homestead,  
and though you tasted not of your labour,  
that grain, today sustains us all  
and keeps your memory alive.

Each grain of brown corn  
now planted and harvested,  
each grain of brown corn  
now eaten and propagated,  
each grain of brown corn  
now sold or offered to God  
by our family, comes from that  
original grain your tender  
hand had planted before  
your bright and promising flame  
was snuffed out.

Your grave in Baforkum cemetery  
has since become a permanent feature  
of the local landscape;  
your final resting place in a country  
church yard has become our family shrine  
and the motive for our yearly pilgrimage  
to renew our wreaths and pledges,  
to commune and fellowship with you in spirit.



Thus a decade has expired  
since our first pilgrimage.  
For ten years we have visited this shrine.  
Ten years have passed by  
since you passed away.  
But, thanks to a grain of corn,  
you continue to live; besides,  
to God we commended your soul.

That you are in Abraham's bosom,  
we doubt it not, son.  
We pray you to intercede for us, poor sinners.  
As for your poisoner, well,  
to the Almighty God  
belongs the ultimate verdict.  
May His name be glorified.

## HEALING DREAMS

Great pals we were;  
wherever I was, there you were.  
At the dining table or in the shower,  
like birds of a feather,  
we were spotted together.

Little wonder, then, that,  
following your untimely demise,  
I was totally devastated,  
reduced to an emotional wreck,  
and nearly demented.

For five years I was haunted by your spirit;  
for five years I walked like a ghost;  
yes, for five years my heart bled painfully.  
Deep was the wound inflicted on my heart,  
and it was sore and slow to heal.

Yet, those sorrowful years  
were also years of joy.  
While in the day I grieved over your death,  
in the night I rejoiced in my sleep.  
I dreamt sweet dreams about you.  
For five years, and almost every night,  
you visited me in my sleep;  
you came to me in my dreams.  
I dreamt that you and I were together;  
I dreamt sweet dreams about you.  
O! a tonic they were, those dreams.  
A boon, they were to my soul.

But at the break of day  
they would vanish away;  
I would rise from sleep in the morning  
and cry to dream again;  
I would try, in vain, to clutch at those dreams.  
They would vapourise into thin air,  
but leaving my heart brimming with joy.

Bernard, after five years you stopped coming;  
after five years you ceased to visit me.  
After five years you refused to appear in my dreams.  
Still I longed in vain to dream about you.  
Yes, sonny, I pondered about your absence.

I asked myself:  
‘Where are they gone to, those glorious dreams?  
Why don’t they come back to me?  
Where is he gone to, my beloved son?  
Why doesn’t he come back to me in my dream?’  
I asked myself these and other questions.  
Then out of Hades, out of the land of the dead,  
a voice spoke out loud and clear:  
‘Living man,  
Listen to the voice of the Lord of Hades.  
Your innocent and upright son came here.  
Because of his moral rectitude  
and good works on earth,  
he was granted one wish of his choice.  
And he opted to return to earth  
to mend his father’s broken heart.  
But since once dead, no one ever  
leaves Hades in flesh and blood,  
Bernard was offered the medium of  
the dream to access you for the period of five years.

‘So, for five years he came to you in your dreams;  
for five years he visited you in your sleep;  
for five years he came to keep you company;  
for five years he came to assuage your pain,  
soothe your soul and make you happy.

‘That joy kept you healthy.  
That comfort sustained your life.  
That happiness healed your heart.  
With your cardiac wound completely cured,  
Bernard considered his mission accomplished.  
So, after five years, he was quickly  
called back to the Underworld  
to prepare for his transition to Heaven.’

Thus spoke the Lord of Hades,  
leaving my heart flowing with sensations sweet  
and a mind teeming with happy thoughts of  
my son in Heaven.

## **WATCH YOUR APPETITE**

There is a thin thread of family fat  
Running through our blood stream.  
Its origins are the genes of ancestors.  
It poses a serious threat to family health  
And my duty is to expose it and to  
Alert the Family to its pernicious power.  
But the environment plays a big role too.

Eat light, drink smart;  
Drink smart to feel light.  
Eat not late at night.  
Eat intelligently to reduce  
Your incidence of coronary thrombosis,  
For upon this depends your life.

Your heart is a terrible thing to destroy.  
The fear of food and drink is the  
Beginning of the loss of weight.  
It makes sense to keep down your weight.  
It pays to control your appetite,  
For upon this depends your life.

Exercise is a sure way  
To shed unwanted pounds.  
Jogging is the way to lose excess kilos.  
Exercise and control your appetite.  
Consider this and mend your ways,  
For upon this depends your life.  
If you must drink,  
Do so in strict moderation.  
It hurts to be a drunk.  
There is nothing but misery  
In a life of alcoholism.

Its nefarious effects are tragic blunders,  
Dishonour and domestic disasters,  
Giving rise to obloquy and regret.

Therefore, today, your happiness should  
Reside in an occasional, healthy sip  
In a general, disciplined life of  
Reading, hard work and sobriety.  
Consider this and mend your ways,  
For upon this depends your life.

## **THE GENUINE SCHOLAR**

***(To Professor Paul Mbangwana)***

He appears hungry;  
but his heart hungers not for food.  
That is the look of a scholar!  
He needs knowledge; he wants to know.  
He seeks to scale higher heights to harvest  
shining stars, and to fathom deeper depths  
to extract precious gems for our delight.

While the rest of humanity is asleep,  
he is awake, anxious about its fate,  
and, like a bee seeking for nectar,  
he is scaling mountains for their honey;  
he is awake, digging deep deeper depths  
to unearth hidden wealth  
to enrich impoverished humankind;  
he is awake, worried at improving  
the lot of his kind on worrying Mother Earth.

He is the true benefactor of man.  
He is Mbangwana Paul.  
That is the genuine scholar!

## ODE TO SABGA HEIGHTS

### 1

Sabga! Twenty-one long years have gone by!  
Sabga la plus belle, a score and a year  
Have rolled away and I am here again!  
Lying between Bambili and Bamessing  
You'll always be Nature's gift to mankind,  
Breathtaking beauty to gladden his soul.  
Not for nothing are your great formations  
Which constitute geological marvels.  
Not in vain was created your colourful  
Landscape, a boon to native or alien.

### 2

Arousing are the fluctuating contours  
Of the rise and fall beat of your vista.  
Sabga, you are Nature's own perfect poem  
Destined to inspire all the potential poets.  
Sabga, you are the fountainhead or the  
Creative spring of some of my own lyrics.  
Thus not for nothing do I value you  
Nor in vain do I muse or meditate  
On you; for though distant from you, many  
a benefit have I derived from you.

### 3

Oh Sabga, one need not be a genius  
To fancy that to access the Poetic Hall  
Of Fame, the immortal Wordsworth passed here too.  
For in you are found some of those features  
That defined his pastoral existence.  
One is tempted to venture that this is



The same or, at least, the spiritual haunt  
Of his glorious and robust, rustic life:  
There is his vale and that is his tall rock;  
There is his cataract and that is his hill;  
There is his mountain and that is his dell;  
There is his shepherd and that's his cottage.  
Yonder are his huge majestic boulders,  
All of which are geological wonders  
To arrest briefly the breath of both the brute  
And the cultured, the rude and the polite.

#### 4

In your wild ugliness lies your beauty;  
Your glory lies in your savage splendour.  
There are undulating hills with dotted  
Flat tops here and there; scrub land and dwarfish  
Vegetation punctuate your surface too.  
But also present is arable land,  
Isolated patches of lush verdure,  
Source of food for folk from time immemorial,  
interspersed with flora and fauna.

#### 5

From Bambili to Bamessing on your  
Right, or from Bamessing to Bambili  
On your left, is a forbidding, massive  
Mountain of a rock lying like a planet  
Close to the road and stretching very high  
Into the sky and reminding viewers  
Of their puny nature in the face of  
Its eternal subduing power. Opposite  
It, in the distance, and above the vale,  
Runs down the sparkling, sounding cataract.

## 6

Sabgal land of ambient, romantic ease!  
Oh wondrous landscape, haunt of poets and tourists!  
What great force created you? What fire, what steam?  
What compulsive power from the earth's centre  
Brought about all this magnetic scenery?  
To look at its fantastic handiwork  
Nature itself must be smiling right now;  
Yes, for its masterpiece is here indeed.  
Your panoramic view and volcanic  
Cones, coupled with other geological  
Features, compel your lovers to ponder  
And wonder at your creation and Creator,  
Winning, sometimes, from among the heathen,  
A soul for the Son of your great Creator.  
Behind your being must be a mightier Being.

## 7

Sabga, for more than twenty years you've been  
To me a mental retreat and comfort.  
You have been my spiritual pilgrimage  
And a moral force inducing good deeds,  
My psychological refuge and, in  
Class, my pedagogic inspiration.  
If all our planned visits to you have failed,  
All my imaginary trips have taken place  
And will continue to do so till death.

## 8

Sabga, man's worst enemy is man himself.  
Unless man controls his own appetite,  
He will end up destroying you and himself.  
Unless man curbs his greed in using your  
Resources, you will soon be denuded

While that man is left unprovided for.  
Gradual deforestation, harmful work  
Of man's hands, speaks of your slow but steady  
Death; the dangerous drop in your water  
Table spells man's future doom if nothing  
Is done to arrest the bad situation.  
It makes good sense, therefore, for your greatest  
Beneficiary, man, to pay great heed.  
He must avoid alien eucalyptus;  
He must go for local mahogany.  
It is environmentally friendly.  
It pays to be conscious of Mother Earth:  
The environment and nature protection.

## 9

Despite incipient insecurity  
Jeopardizing your idyllic picture,  
Despite occasional, nascent hold-ups  
Instilling fear in your admirers,  
Sabga, I'll continue to adore you.  
How can I ever forget to do so?  
I will go on worshipping you for what  
You have done, been and will continue to  
Be to me. Indeed, I love you even  
More now for what you are to Lady Zee  
Who, in her little, beautiful cell phone,  
Has stored countless pictures of your features,  
Depicting your striking capricious moods,  
Food for the future and restoration  
Of her own sensitive romantic soul.



## **GO & TELL LADY ZEE**

Blow! Zephyr blow!  
Blow my message away!  
Carry my words and whisper  
them into the ears of Lady Zee  
Tell my Rose among the maidens  
that April is here  
and I am waiting  
waiting for her.

Go! Zephyr go!  
Carry my words away!  
Tell my Lily among the thorns  
that gone is the harmattan,  
gone the season of pain,  
that April is here  
healthy April, April of shoots and buds  
and that I am waiting  
waiting for her.

Float Zephyr float! Float and  
tell the melon of my eye  
that in this month of the year  
(when fresh are buds with dew  
and healthy the air breathed by all as  
tourists long to travel far and beyond  
to savour the sweetness of the air)  
yes, tell the melon of my eye  
that I am waiting, anxiously waiting for her.

## **MY SUPERSTELLA**

You are my superstar  
which, on a starry night,  
shines brightest in the sky.  
For, when from your habitual spot  
you appear in the heavens,  
you eclipse, at once, lesser stars  
that peep timorously from under  
your powerful beam  
to find inferior roles for themselves.

You are my superstella, sans pareil.  
Yet, for all your rare endowments  
that place you in a class all alone,  
you are most modest and mature;  
you remain sober and refuse to be  
intoxicated by the force of your charms;  
you resist letting your brains and beauty  
go to your head like potent palm wine  
to pollute your reason.

You are my shining star.  
My wish is that you may continue  
to shine on me with the constancy  
and grace that make you Duty's dearest daughter  
and kindle in me the spark that will  
engrave your name in the Hall of Fame  
as a brilliant belle, but self-effacing.

## HER SMILES

When Lady Zee's smiles change dull Septembers  
Into joyous and fruitful Decembers,  
Then the pangs felt in the rainy season  
Are healed by the balms of the dry season;  
So birds, beasts and men who have been hiding  
From the season's roughness come out singing  
To praise God, everyone, for His kindness  
In changing dullness into happiness.  
Who, unless a dead man, can fail to feel  
This important change with much hope and zeal?  
That is how my heart feels when your great hips,  
Coupled with those smooth and delicious lips,  
Drive away all darksome clouds from your face  
And dress it with a cheerful look of grace.

## **WE ARE ONE**

You dwell with me, my darling;  
you walk with me all the hours of the day.  
Hardly does an hour pass by  
that I do not meditate on you.

I dream of you, my dear;  
I dream of you all the nights of the year.  
Not a single night goes by  
but I must muse upon you.

True, you stay far away,  
and apart from me;  
yet you live nigh enough  
to be a part of me.

There is no severance  
of the bond binding us;  
for our two souls are one,  
made of invisible elastic.  
And although it might be overstretched, it would suffer  
no rupture;  
for we are one.



## **BEAUTY BEYOND COMPARE**

When I meditate on sweet Zee  
of a Monday morning, a fortnight ago,  
as she awaited, by the bus, the approaching  
hour of her departure on vacation,  
a figure glorious and ethereal to behold,  
with vitality in her eyes,  
with bright, fresh and delicate lips  
complementing a chocolate haunting face,  
with smooth, soft and well-kept hands,  
a shape resplendent, irresistible and intensely desirable  
in a pink attire that proclaimed her  
queen of the universe, I cannot but grant  
that she is a beauty beyond compare;  
that hers is the kind of captured beauty that lasts forever;  
that, indeed, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.'

## **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**

On this day  
When lovers feel great  
To be loved and to be truly in love;

On this Lovers' day  
When lovers young and old  
Are united by the youthful  
Spirit of Love  
Moving all over the world;

On this very romantic day  
When Venus the goddess of love  
Is moving in hearts bound together  
By her son's arrows,  
By arrows from Cupid's bow,  
Stirring and inspiring lovers to scribble  
Words of endearment to beloved ones;

Oh yes, on this Valentine's day  
My thoughts fondly fly to the shrine  
Where lives my idol, my goddess,  
Reminding her that the flames ignited  
More than three years ago  
Are still burning with as much  
Power as when first set ablaze;  
That the fuel's fountain is still full.

It could not have been otherwise;  
The sweet girl I set eyes on  
More than three years ago is just  
As wonderful and gracious now as then;  
She is just as beautiful and attractive  
Now as then.  
By the same token my love for her  
Is just as constant as ever!  
Happy Valentine's Day, Lady Zee.

## ON MEETING LADY ZEE

Dear Zee, when this morning I set eyes  
on you, I was simply out of breath  
on account of your sensuous outfit:  
a brown trico over brown velvet shorts,  
revealing a stunning callipygian behind;  
while blessed brown slippers kissed your tender feet,  
a lucky gold chain lay between your ripe breasts.

Your pretty face haunts me day and night,  
while your succulent, scarlet lips are juicy  
honeycombs beckoning to be eaten.  
If I have fallen, head over heels, for you,  
it is because I am beside myself.

Stronger than the strength of the violent storm,  
and deeper than the depth of the vast ocean,  
are my feelings for you.  
I am buffeted in the rough sea of passion,  
and will soon sink unless you save me.  
You alone hold, in your hand, the life-buoy,  
and, thus, the choice whether I flounder or I float.

Could ever a man bare his heart this much  
who did not admire genuinely?  
Was there ever a love-worn insomniac  
without an object in view?  
Will you rebuff or will you receive me?

Greater yearning has no devotee than this,  
that a youth muses and meditates upon  
a girl until he forgets to eat!  
Truly, I say unto you, Zee:  
With you in mind, these days, my lot is neglect.

## A MOMENT AGO

A moment ago,  
driving in a pleasure car in dreamland,  
and defying gravity, we were ejected,  
you and me, by the romantic law of motion,  
into the celestial, ethereal region,  
way beyond earthly cares.

As we sailed on cotton-white fluffy clouds,  
and trailed other glorious clouds,  
our two souls soon dissolved into one.  
And, like the clouds that gathered and formed  
countless designs and burst again,  
our single soul assumed numerous  
shapes but annihilated them just as fast.

After gleefully floating across the sky,  
we landed noiselessly back on earth.  
But no sooner were we back to land  
than we soared to more romantic sites  
where we stood rapt in contemplation  
of craggy precipices, dizzy hanging cliffs,  
cascading streams, frothing pools, and roaring dells;  
or where, on our elbows, we lay supine in  
rippling, savanna grass  
as the fresh April breeze caressed our temples.  
What ecstasy it is for me, Lady Zee,  
to fling open the fountain of feelings  
inspired by reflections on you!  
What soothing and relieving sensations  
course through my corporeal frame  
when I muse deeply upon you!  
Little was I aware of the value  
of my hoarded impressions of you.

Now I should know better.  
I will garner food for future days  
so that, when on long vacation  
you will have gone, I will sit back  
and, yes, even in fantasy,  
see, smell, hear or feel you  
as often as I want, to my heart's content,  
indeed, for the restoration of body and soul.

## **A UNIVERSAL TYRANT**

Lady Zee, you have rekindled in me  
a desire long thought dead,  
a fire long believed extinct, and  
a spark long considered gone.

In me you have caused a tremor  
that has rocked the foundation of my world.  
Like a volcano, stirred from within,  
and about to erupt, I am on fire,  
the very stuff out of which is made  
the conflagration of empires,  
the passion Paris prior to the capture  
of fair Helen must have known.  
Indeed, love is a universal tyrant  
to whose command all men must succumb.

Of all the girls I have encountered,  
all the maidens I have met,  
all the fair women I have known,  
none has worked on me a spell  
as you have done;  
nor drawn me out of my shell  
as you have done;  
nor stirred my imagination  
as you have done.

With you in mind, I am a different man.  
Even as I struggle to form these words,  
propelled by passion and a power beyond me,  
I know not what, nor who, I am.

When the day comes that in school  
I must see you, my heart rejoices like  
the clock-bird, at the dawn of day,  
pouring out its soul in a throaty song.

At such moments I experience an  
unbelievable pleasant wave of feelings,  
a fantastic sensation rippling through  
my veins with restorative effects.  
This, I would not exchange for a king's crown.

## **SHE BRIGHTENS ALL**

This week the folk have been moaning their fate,  
for dark, dull clouds have overrun the sky,  
leaving the sun in its incomplete state  
in the daily radiance it should supply  
when it brightens human life in its sway.  
Without it living things will surely die.  
Yes, many a man this week is not gay  
as everyone utters only a sigh.  
But Lady Zee has pitied them today:  
She's decided the folk to gratify.  
She's risen and pushed all the clouds away  
as soon as her smile appeared by and by.  
Thus without Zee's smile our day will be dull,  
for she's the sun that brightens me and all.



## ALL FOR A FACE

Here is the face, Lady Zee's face.  
This is the bewitching face  
that has beamed on me  
and lit my path to self-discovery.  
I now put it down in plain words:  
Each romantic man is a potential poet  
waiting but for the right woman  
to ignite a flame in his heart.

There was a time  
when to me this haunting face  
with its bulging seductive eyes  
was the fountain of many a lyric,  
the muse that mediated in my moments  
of poetic parturition.  
My heart still swells with joy  
to think that the charming face  
can yet kindle and energize.

How sweet it is that,  
of all potential poets,  
I have been fated to fête this face!  
Do I then elope with her?  
Do I dare to defy the world?  
Can I risk all for a face  
and by so doing become a  
Paris or a pariah?

## **A FRUITFUL VOYAGE**

Sweet Zee, well have you marked out  
the course of your fruitful voyage.  
The imaginative English boats are rigged  
for a cruising voyage across the oceans:  
your alert mind on the way to fictional  
adventures is resolutely set.

Sure to sail beyond national waters,  
you will be transported by lyrical  
vessels to alien realms and kingdoms  
with different climes and mores.  
Buffeted dramas, stormy epics and rapid, gliding  
prose will pilot you to populous ports  
and swarming cities. For full are the sails  
of the novel, never in want of winds.

The creative crafts will make you discover  
foreign folk of diverse deportment:  
some will be impulsive, others phlegmatic.  
These betray impetuous tantrums  
like the angry seas in tempestuous weather;  
those reveal stable tempers like the steady ship in calm  
waters.  
But by and large they remain spirited types  
animated by basic human passions  
limited to neither time nor place.

The more you traverse the fictive oceans,  
the wiser you will become in the ways  
of the world; and being a shrewd  
student of human nature and literature,  
I hope, you will provide your own  
locally-rigged vessel with a sterling crew,  
exporting for consumption the customs of Cameroon.

## FROM GLOOM TO GLEE

With no destination in sight,  
and like an errant cloud  
at the mercy of whimsical winds,  
I rambled on the campus,  
with my moods tottering  
on the verge of despair.

Then Fate cried out loud and clear:  
'Let there be sunshine'  
and my heart gave a lurch,  
when I caught sight of my heart.  
Behold I beheld my goddess!  
Behold I bumped into Zee!  
Behold I from the brink of  
despondency was yanked  
onto the terrafirma of hope!

My heart throbbed  
and swelled with joy  
as I hurried to greet my heart.  
Having espied me,  
she, in turn, rushed to meet me!

Her tuneful voice was celestial  
music in my ear,  
and her face a magnet,  
ever drawing me closer to her;  
while her figure was pure  
glory to behold.

Suddenly my condition changed,  
as a rain-drenched cock  
became a jubilant throaty rooster

announcing the dawn of a brand new day;  
and the world that, hither to,  
had worn a cloud of gloom,  
now put on an apparel of glee.

## CELLPHONE CONTACT

Lady Zee, you are the contents of my mind.  
You fill every nook and cranny  
of my fancy the way  
a boiled egg fills its shell,  
leaving me, in the night,  
to wallow in sweet insomnia.

Thanks to a hi-tech gadget,  
we have made nonsense  
of the gulf between us,  
reducing to nil nine scores and ten miles;  
yes, thanks to the magic of a quaint  
contraption, we have demolished  
that long distance and reached out  
to touch each other,  
savouring the voice, clutched  
to the ear, at the other end.

Yet, for all the marvels of this hi-tech gadget,  
I hear but a mere voice!  
I crave for more than a disembodied voice;  
ours is a love based more on physics and less on  
metaphysics,  
more on the senses, and less on theory.

For, hearing Zee is believing;  
seeing Zee is proof;  
but touching Zee is confirmation.  
I hope to palpably prove  
and confirm your existence  
when next I come to town  
to hear, see, and touch you.  
Then will I believe, prove and confirm your being.

## THE SPITTING COBRA

If in the season of romance  
I espy Lady Zee with a youth  
walking arm-in-arm in love,  
or if I find her consorting with her peer  
though he may look at her with a leer;

If in the garden of love  
I chance upon Zee chatting  
with her equal even as  
he longs to devour her in lust,  
then the spitting cobra in me  
will be barely ruffled.

But should I spot her anywhere  
in the company of my match,  
with or without designs on her,  
even as they sit  
merely to dream away their time,  
then and anon my cobra-head  
rears itself forebodingly;

Then and anon my ready fangs are filled  
with the blinding gall  
that will teach my heedless rival  
how to grope his way in the dark  
to find his final bed six feet deep.

## THE DREAM

Last night I had a very scary dream  
In which, to project into the future  
Lady Zee's beauty and charms, I cut into  
The bark of a mango-tree her sweet name,  
Daring my friends to show me her better  
If, indeed, in this age they can find one.

With this single act not contented,  
In thick blue paint I wrote the same  
On the ceiling of my classroom,  
Challenging my peers to name  
Another girl with natural gifts  
Of genius and charms superior to hers.

Still with this second deed less satisfied,  
And driven by the urge to proclaim her fame,  
I, on my school desk, engraved her name  
And also on the bench on which I sat,  
Daring my colleagues to produce her equal,  
Knowing full well that Zee was sans pareil.

But years later, many years, in that dream,  
When I returned to the old wounded tree,  
The big one on which I had carved "Zee",  
Behold! "Zee" was no where to be found.  
The wound had healed up, consuming her name,  
Leaving no trace of her behind.

When to the classroom I turned, I was faced  
With ruins and total desolation:  
Where, on the ceiling her name was writ large,  
I beheld a grim, gaping cavity,  
A parody of the former ceiling,

With no sign of Zee's name.  
Undaunted I made straight for desk and bench  
Where with my tool I had engraved her name.  
Behold the story was the same:  
Bench and desk were all but gone,  
Reduced to dust and mud by moth and all  
Without a clue of Zee's name.

Dejected, baffled and motionless I stood.  
Then a cynical and disembodied voice  
Spoke to my hearing in that very dream:  
"Puny man, like the foregoing examples,  
Your tall, stately Lady Zee will pass away:  
Nothing on this earth can dare Time's sickle".

"Impossible! It can't be," I replied,  
"If Zee cannot exist in these ways,  
she will live forever in my poetry."  
When I turned around to see who it was,  
I was wide awake, alone in my bed,  
While my Lady Zee was far away from me.



## THE BEAST IN MY INSIDE

When, under the spell  
of Lady Zee's beauty,  
I am awash with  
a flood of feelings and passion,  
then the beast in my inside  
swings from side to side  
as it strains to break loose  
from its leash.

I become weak-kneed  
and succumb to its demand.  
Then through the walls  
of my inside as if  
through a paper wall  
breaks the impetuous animal.

With incredible speed and ardour  
it bolts for its catch,  
bounding and leaping  
over valleys and mountains,  
yapping and whining  
over hills and vales.

With fire in its eyes  
and desire in its heart  
it makes for its target  
with this sole craving.  
But as it bundles itself up with a  
pounding heart prepared to pounce on its prey  
With a keen, horny appetite,  
behold Lady Zee lifts up  
her hand and commands  
"No! Stop it!"

Instantly slumps the brute,  
helpless and harmless as if  
impaled on the spot  
with a divine stake.  
O! Lady Zee says “no” with such sweet grace  
that she pleases even as she refuses;  
she attracts even when she rejects!

## **FUTURE WOMAN OF LETTERS**

Dear Zee, with empty hands I come to you,  
bringing neither silver nor gold.  
But such gifts as I own I give you:  
stories from my shelf and songs from my soul.  
Such are the presents I drop in your lap  
for the improvement of your mind.

For well I know that a well-nurtured mind  
is an antidote against darkness, and  
a vaccine against ignorance, both of  
which push further the frontiers of dumbness.  
For, truly I tell you, the human mind  
uncultivated, is a terrible thing to waste.

The rapidity with which you devour  
my tales and the growing interest you take  
in my songs give me reason to believe  
in the possibilities of the Cameroonian woman  
and the spring of your literary career.  
There is, indeed, cause for optimism.

I foresee a great woman in you,  
one with awesome oratorical powers  
and eloquence unsurpassed.  
In you I envision a fine wielder  
of the power of the pen, a word-artist.  
Perhaps in you is born our own Jane Austen.

Already evident are signs of things to be.  
The mustard seed has taken root;  
the giant tree will surely come to be.  
The girl is mother of the woman to be.  
Your felicitous prose and ease of  
expression, fruit of your voracious  
reading, prefigure the future woman  
of letters that my sweet Zee will be.

## THE MOSQUITO

The mosquito defiles my coy lady;  
the puny insect devours her skin.  
The cruel creature leaves its odious  
bites on her beautiful body  
now in need of a soothing balm.

While my eyes feast on her glorious body,  
the mosquito gorges on her.  
The wretch takes without wooing what with  
persuasion is beyond me.

Do I dare to debauch her?  
Do I yield to the id  
and call in question civilization?  
Should my id take the driver's seat  
and drive home the throbbing car?

The Mosquito attacks and violates;  
it seizes, sucks and succeeds.  
The beast grabs and ravishes my lady  
and then abandons her with bleeding scars.  
Yea, the brainless brute has an id  
to satisfy, but I have an  
Ego to defend.

## **YOU ARE THE BEST**

Much have I travelled  
and much have I seen  
in terms of female beauty and charms.  
But never have I met  
a girl with your charms.

There's a style in your walk,  
and a charm in your smile;  
there's magic in your look,  
and majesty in your manners,  
all of them a magnate  
that pulls me to bow down  
before you and worship at your feet  
and pay tribute to your rare beauty.

What my eye admires  
my heart desires.  
Yes, my heart hungers after you!  
What sensations  
when you're in my arms!  
Zee, you're the Best!

## **ZEE IS MY MUSE**

My poetry is Zee and Zee my poetry.  
Lady Zee was ordained to inspire me  
and I fated to celebrate her beauty,  
the one the muse, the other the bard.

Without Zee the poet would cease to be,  
and sans the poet, unsung would be  
Lady Zee's charms.  
Thus, for better or for worse,  
we are destined to be of service  
to each other.

Isn't this what fate is all about?  
Isn't this part of Venus's sightless design?  
Her blind kid, cupid, with his arrow  
has pierced through our hearts,  
making it possible for me  
to send to Zee another Valentine,  
wishing her rapid recovery  
from her malaria bout.  
Happy Valentine, Lady Zee!

## THE MUSE IS STILL THERE

My bardic harvest is meagre  
after an apparent lyric drought.  
The yield is scarce not  
for want of a muse;  
no, the poetic product is paltry  
because of the delicacy of my Muse's situation.

While active as ever  
is my mythopoetic faculty,  
stable Ego calls for caution,  
restraining zestful Id  
to find work with visionary Sublimation.  
Best safety, they say, lies in fear.

Now have I realized how  
impossible it is for me  
to scribble a neutral poetic line  
to my Muse; no! no neutrality,  
for the Muse is too much with me.  
And not for anything in the world  
will I dispense with my Muse.  
I live, breathe, and muse upon my Muse.

## **HAPPINESS AND SADNESS**

Dear Lady, I cannot enjoy brightness  
and suffer you to undergo darkness  
when with two or only a simple dime  
I can promptly come to your aid in time  
and put on your visage a little smile  
even if it lasts only for a while,  
and by so doing, I your sadness erase,  
an act that brightens up your haunting face.  
For surely it is my greatest pleasure  
to be of service to my dear Treasure.  
So, accept, Lady Zee, these pennies few  
as a token of my esteem for you.  
For incomplete would be my happiness  
until you're free from the grip of sadness.



## **BREATH TAKING BEAUTY**

When I was lucky to come across you,  
when you charmed me for the first time  
with your striking features  
and I began to write lyrics to you,  
this girl's picture you see is an interpretation  
of how you appeared to me then;  
this amazing photo in your hands is the way I saw Zee at  
the beginning of our relationship;  
the very photograph is virtual Lady Zee now;  
and that is how, to me, Zee will be in the future.  
But beautiful as she is, the girl means  
absolutely nothing to me, although the whole world, but  
only in so far as she reminds me of  
Lady Zee's breathtaking beauty.  
Yes, Lady Zee's stunning sultry looks  
will forever remain with me, since  
'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.'

## THE NIGHT OF THE NIGHTMARE

On that dark Saturday night  
I was almost smothered to death  
when Lady Zee unplugged the electrical  
conduit connecting our two souls,  
leaving me at the receiving end  
without electrical power,  
without the will to live.

At once I ran the gamut of depression,  
devastation, migraines,  
throbbing ear drums, a broken heart  
and insomnia.  
That's right, I slept not a wink  
on the night of the nightmare.

When the emotional bombshell was dropped  
on the night of the blackout,  
I felt the ground beneath my feet giving way;  
I felt my soul oozing out of me;  
I felt a crucial part of me dying,  
for my heart was about to snap,  
and I was half in love with easeful death.

Again and again that dreadful night  
I woke up to the bitter reality;  
I woke up to face the terrible Truth;  
I woke up to confront the Nightmare.  
And there it was standing, huge like an Elephant:  
the most beautiful and brilliant woman in my  
life was about to slip through my fingers;  
a crucial part of me was dying forever.  
And like a child I wept like never before.  
Yes, I was partially in love with painless death.

But thanks to Venus's timely intervention,  
thanks to therapeutic sessions  
of soul-to-soul telephone talks,  
thanks to soul-searching sessions of  
telephone conversations,  
I have been rescued from death;  
for we have electrically been reconnected  
by the arrow from Cupid's bow.  
At last I can now declare with relief:  
Not Frankenstein, my name is Pigmalion.

## **LOOK UP IN THE SKY!**

Look! Look!  
Look up in the sky  
and tell me what you see there.  
Look at the moon.  
Yes, the moon with two stars.  
That is Lady Zee with her guardian stars,  
the superluna in the company of the stars.

Look at the placement of the stars.  
Look at how they stand.  
Not equidistant from her,  
one is nearer, the other farther.  
One is weaker, the other stronger,  
but both of whose breasts are  
full of fire for her,  
with their gaze gravitated towards her.

Not in known rivalry over her  
each performs an assigned task:  
the stronger is the roving star;  
the weaker and supporter, the home-based star.  
The latter is ready to surrender his role  
as soon as the former regains his base.

The weaker star will gradually  
fade out when the brighter one  
takes sole control.  
Nothing could be more natural.  
That's right, the home-based star will behind the  
mountain disappear as soon as the  
itinerant powerful Ambikoh takes centre stage,  
as soon as he returns to base at Sabga Heights  
to resume his lunar dominance.

## **ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE**

It is easier for engineers  
to construct from planet Earth to the moon  
your super highway  
than for me to wipe out from  
my consciousness memories of Lady Zee.

A mega tower, built on a sounder  
foundation, would sooner deliver  
Earth's message at Heaven's Gate  
than for me to deracinate from my mind  
vestiges of Lady Zee's rule.

A glacial mountain melting at the slow  
rate of a millimetre per century  
would sooner melt away in a life-time  
than for me to uproot from my psyche  
the impact made by Lady Zee.

Que faire? It is better to cave in  
than the impossible to attempt to do;  
better to praise aloud than to try to wipe out her name;  
better to glorify than to essay to nullify her fame;  
better to sing abroad than to try to blot out her name.  
Yes, Lady Zee deserves no less than this.

## **IF I WERE TO HATE MY LADY**

Do I hate Lady Zee?  
No; hate is hardly the right word  
to describe my passion for Lady Zee;  
hate is too strong but too weak a word  
to convey my unique emotion  
towards this exceptional woman.

To me Lady Zee is an object  
intensely desirable;  
she is very delicate and fragile.  
Like an egg, she's to be handled with  
care and love, and not scorn or hate.

A rare specie,  
Lady Zee is charming, beautiful and brilliant.  
But she adds to these sterling qualities  
admirable strength of character,  
maturity and wisdom beyond her years.  
Surely a woman like this should  
inspire adulation, and not hate.

But, oh! If I were to hate my Lady!  
Then world languages would have to be rewritten;  
then humanity would have to reinvent itself  
to look for a stronger word than hate  
to convey the devastating power of my passion;  
for I would not hate in short measure.  
The impact of my hatred would be on a global scale.  
If I were to hate my Lady,  
then my hatred would be as big and deep  
as my love for her;  
then my anger, my emotional balloon,  
would expand and fill the entire cosmos

as a boiled egg fills its shell.  
And were this full balloon to explode,  
then there would be no trace that life  
ever existed on planet Earth;  
then your atomic bomb would be a harmless toy  
beside my exploded balloon.  
And my hatred would have the effect of  
a blood-dimmed tide flowing from Limbe,  
passing through humid Mamfe,  
to distant and cold Nkambe,  
calcifying everything in its path  
and then settling in Yaounde  
to take on a national coloration  
before assuming the form of  
final, tidal waves of cosmic cataclysm.

## TELEPATHY

Lady Zee

Sometimes, when in the middle of dialling  
you, I have been stopped by your sudden call;  
and occasionally, by your admission,  
I have broken in on your thoughts  
when you were thinking of me.  
And so our cell phones have confirmed  
our occasional, simultaneous thinking of each other.

We have often marvelled at the  
coincidence of our thoughts, feelings and moods  
and wondered why so.

And here I state the answer loud and clear:  
Telepathy; it resides in telepathy.  
That's right, the answer lies in the intriguing  
communication of thoughts and feelings  
between allied souls across distances.  
Your brief message today was the occasion  
for yet another telepathy,  
the umpteenth telepathy!

Ever since your heart and my heart were pierced  
by Cupid's arrow, our two souls have  
interfused, becoming one entity.  
But while our bodies are earthbound  
our blended, purer soul has gravitated  
towards a higher ethereal region,  
the home of Royal Essence.

And like a stable satellite  
our single soul, centre of our thoughts  
and feelings, is lodged in an  
inter-galactic orbit whence it emits



infrared romantic beams  
that animate our earthbound bodies.  
So our earthbound bodies – your body  
and my body – and our quintessential soul  
are in an isosceles triangular union.

Your body and my body both  
constitute the base of the triangle  
while its top is our superior soul.  
And our soul, the Monarch of our bodies,  
activates our two bodies through two  
cosmic romantic rays.  
These sentimental shafts of light,  
equidistant from our galactic soul,  
make up the two equal sides of the triangle,  
and then connect with our two bodies.

Such being the case,  
it is useless for our bodies to shun  
each other; it is needless for us to  
put up defences. What we fear  
to yield has already been endorsed  
by our purer soul, the inter-galactic tenant,  
thanks to the triangular union  
of our two bodies and our single soul.  
They cannot be wrong, our earthbound bodies.  
Therefore, our earthbound desires  
cannot be termed dirt, for they  
have been sanctioned by a higher  
authority, our blended, superior single soul.

## **LADY ZEE'S REPLY: THE SYMPHONY**

Let me be the guitar  
Slung across your firm chest  
Held by your masterful arm  
Close to your heart to love and cuddle  
So gentle and muscular and strong.

Let me be the piano  
That your confident fingers  
Caress, tingle, lovingly touch  
Your piano to play  
With lingering loving music.

Let me be your lyrical drum  
Your magical beat  
Controlling the sweet rhythm  
And the pulsating vibrations  
Of our souls' romantic sensations.

## **EPITHALAMION (ODE TO LADY ZEE)**

### **1**

Sisters Nine, offspring of Mnemosyne and Zeus!  
Often when in search of inspiration  
to praise others have I turned to you.  
Olympian goddesses of inspiration,  
Many a time have you come to my aid  
in my hour of poetic parturition.  
If you could help me to praise others  
will you now abandon me when I  
solicit the same succour for my own sake?  
Hearken, therefore, Muses Nine, hearken to my appeal.  
Come, therefore, members of Apollo's retinue.  
Come to my rescue.  
Come and help me to celebrate, in verse,  
the day of my own glory.  
Come and assist me to immortalise,  
in poetry, the day I captured  
the greatest woman on earth.

### **2**

Go! Messengers, go!  
Go and tell the world here and abroad  
that the news is out that will transform me;  
that the word has been pronounced that will  
make me a superman, for Lady Zee  
has given her consent that before the day  
runs its full course, we shall both be  
candidates at Hymen's holy shrine.  
Proclaim the good tidings with trumpet  
and the calling drum.  
Declare the good news over hills and valleys

that the whole world may hear:  
Go! Dudum messengers, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum,*  
*from one Dudum drum to another*  
*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

### 3

You, nymphs of Dudum woods,  
and you, mermaids of Dudum falls and rivers,  
You, delicate sylphs of Dudum skies,  
and you, darling fairies of Dudum forests,  
arise and fly to Lady Zee's abode.  
Go and whisper into the ears of my Love.  
Tell her that the day is here that I will  
make her what she least dreamed of: the greatest woman  
in the whole world.  
Yes, go and inform her before the sun  
appears in the east to chase away  
the darkness of the night from Dudum land.  
Go! Dudum mermaids, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum,*  
*from one Dudum drum to another*  
*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

### 4

Make the way clear for Lady Zee.  
Open up the path for her to pass through.  
Yes, the Queen of the Universe is up  
and ready to make straight for the place  
of ceremony.  
All seamstresses and all attendants,  
Get ready to deck your Mistress in her

freshest and finest attire.

Select from the best wardrobe what will  
make this paragon of beauty  
more unparalleled in world beauty.

But first watch what you yourselves are  
wearing, lest you offend her delicate taste.

Go! Attendants, go!

*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*

*Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another  
that the Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 5

You, choral groups of Dudum country church.  
Come out with all your best melodies.

Select from your repertoire the best rally songs  
most of which have thrilled many a soul,  
and for which you have won many a trophy  
on many a rally ground in all of Dudum land.

Yes, you Madrigal, bring out your best.

And you, CYF, let your fingers drum  
on the skin-drum to produce those soul-  
elevating sounds that have pulled many  
to our church.

And you Bethel, where are you?

Bethel Choir, bring out your best songs  
that have lifted many souls to Heaven's gate.

Go! Bethel Choir, go!

*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*

*Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another  
that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 6

The bridal party is on its way to  
the ceremonial ground.  
Lady Zee is in their midst to the festive scene.  
But Lady Zee will not budge an inch until  
cash from the groom's coffers flows easily.  
Lady Zee will not walk fast until the  
groom has proven his worth in terms of wealth.  
So, let the bride be showered with wealth.  
Let my wealth around Lady Zee flow  
so that she can begin to walk faster.  
Now, around the bride brand new bills are falling.  
Around my Love countless coins are pouring down.  
And jubilant are all the relatives  
picking up the sprinkled cash around Lady Zee.  
Now, messengers, trumpet the word abroad  
that the bride is moving faster at last!  
Go! Dudum messengers, go!  
Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!  
Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another  
that the Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous  
echoes.

## 7

In the country church they are now gathered.  
Christians young and old are all seated,  
clad in their multicoloured expensive attire.  
Music from choral groups rings from corner  
to corner, as with throaty voices and  
harmonious instruments they make a joyful  
noise unto Heaven.  
The church vibrates with heavenly music  
as the faithful await the bridal party.

In four rows they await, the faithful await;  
in four rows of 20 pews they joyfully  
await the arrival of the celebrities,  
while, in turn, choirs from four key corners  
of the church thrill all and sundry with  
soul-lifting songs that the outside world  
should be informed of:

Go! Dudum messengers, go!

*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*

*Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another*

*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 8

The couple is at the entrance to the church.  
The festooned archway is loaded with fresh flowers.  
And thick in the air is the sweet fragrance  
of a profusion of country flowers.

Ask not where the flower girls are.

They are there, six in number, in their  
beautiful dresses and with their bouquets of flowers.

Ask not where the pageboys are.

They too are there, six in number, in their  
trim attire, and ready to put things in order.

The bridesmaids, ask not about the bridesmaids,  
for they too are there.

Well- selected beauties in their own right,  
the bridesmaids are there, and any could  
easily pass for the bride herself.

As for the groomsmen they too are there.

In their well-cut black suits they are

Dudum's models of strength and handsomeness.

So Dudum drummers should inform the out-  
side world of this. Go! Dudum drummers, go!

*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*

*Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another  
that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 9

And the couple, now is their turn;  
the couple cannot be left out here.  
First the groom, the groom must be mentioned first.  
And many are those who have said to have  
captured such an earthly glory as Lady  
Zee, the groom must have been a superstar  
himself; so by general consent the groom  
is said to be a notch or two above  
the best of the groomsmen, and with that  
we need say no more about him.  
And now to the bride, we must now turn to the bride.  
We must now turn to the trophy of the day.  
We must now look at Lady Zee the bride.  
With a soft silky skin of chocolate  
complexion Lady Zee possesses  
stunning sultry looks that would turn  
many a beauty green with envy.  
In her stainless white and flowing wedding gown  
with a delicate but transparent veil  
thrown over her head and shoulders, Lady  
Zee is the epitome of female beauty,  
now Queen of Dudum Clan.  
We therefore have only one appeal to make:  
Go! Dudum messengers, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum,  
from one Dudum drum to another  
that the Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*



## 10

The procession is moving into the church;  
the bride and the groom are now moving in.  
Let the faithful stand up to receive them.  
Led by the flower girls and the pageboys,  
the bridal party is moving into  
the church following a slow, solemn song by  
the Madrigal Choir and a piano.  
The bridal pilot squirts from a device  
coloured, perfumed flakes above the heads  
of those processing.  
But above and over the heads of the  
couple, coloured flakes come down in great profusion.  
But by and by the couple soon gain the altar  
where to tie the knot the priest is waiting,  
information worth trumpeting abroad,  
even as far as Sabga Heights,  
with the help of the calling drum:  
Go, Dudum messengers, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum,*  
*from one Dudum drum to another*  
*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 11

And now is the time for the final act,  
now the time for the final word,  
the crescendo of all our little loves,  
the raison d'être of the courtship poems.  
And now my beautiful and brilliant Lady Zee,  
by the power of all the amoretti;  
by the strength of magic telepathy;  
by the force of fantastic SS;  
in the name of the moon and the two stars;

in the name of your own word «Peut-etre»;  
in the name of sweet ‘Symphony’  
I implore you to put your hand in mine  
before the priest and the congregation  
to affirm that we are husband and wife.  
Ah! Yes, she does, and the act is done.  
«Both of you are husband and wife, today»,  
the priest confirms by raising high our hands.  
And thunderous is the standing ovation  
that deserves to be extended abroad  
through the sound of the calling drum:  
Go! Dudum drummers, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers, drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum*  
*from one Dudum drum to another*  
*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

## 12

Now that in church the rite is over,  
outside the church feasting should begin.  
Let victuals of all sorts be on display.  
Let viands of all kinds satisfy all tastes.  
Let beers of all brands fill the tables  
and wines from all climes indulge every tongue.  
The sun is shining in our hearts  
as it is shining on Dudum Land.  
Our joy is full and complete  
and our cup is running over.  
Therefore, let the wine flow abundantly,  
not in calabashes nor in jugs  
but in drums and in barrels.  
Let it flow like water from the tap.  
But no Bacchanalian celebration  
is tolerated here; nor are Dionysian  
orgies permitted here.

In this Christian wedding moderation  
is the order of the day.  
Let celebrants drink to their fill.  
Let revellers drink and roar aloud  
so that drummers can take over the song:  
Go! Dudum drummers, go!  
*Drum! Dudum drummers drum!*  
*Send the message through the calling drum,*  
*from one Dudum drum to another*  
*that Dudum valleys may resound with thunderous echoes.*

### 13

All day long are heard joyous sounds of  
celebration from all corners of the clan;  
all day long are heard happy songs of  
festivities from all parts of Dudum Clan.  
From one end of Dudum Clan to another,  
are fired staccato gunshots of revelry.  
But as evening draws near,  
as the sun draws nearer and nearer to the west,  
so too begins to diminish the intensity of festivity;  
so too begins to decline the ardour of jubilee;  
so too begins to dwindle the number of wedding guests;  
so too begins to die down the clamour of carousal.  
And as darkness envelopes Dudum Clan,  
all sounds are smothered, and nothing is heard,  
for from the festive scene have all guests disappeared.  
So there is no Dudum drum to be drummed,  
and no message to be sent from one  
Dudum drum to another.  
Therefore, there will be no resounding  
echoes to be heard from Dudum valleys.

## 14

Now the festivities are over.  
Tonight we are the world reduced to our bedroom.  
Beyond these four walls nothing else matters.  
And no one can reproach us for whatever  
we do here and now.  
Our inter-galactic single soul  
had earlier confirmed our union.  
Before man and God the Priest ratified  
it in church this morning.  
What our earthbound bodies feel cannot be wrong.  
Therefore, our earthbound desires  
cannot be termed dirt.  
So, come into our conjugal bed, baby.  
Come, without delay, come my dear Zee.  
Come into our sanctified marital bed.  
Leave aside your usual coyness;  
leave it aside.  
Put away your accustomed shyness;  
put it away.  
Coyness has no place in our case tonight.  
Whatever we do here  
ends within the four walls of our bedroom.  
There is no Dudum drum to be drummed  
and no message to be sent from one  
Dudum drum to another.  
Therefore, there will be no resounding  
echoes to be heard from the Dudum valleys.

## 15

Lady Zee is now in my arms, my glory.  
Like the moon and her galaxy of stars,  
may we be blessed with numerous progeny  
to be brought up in the fear of the Lord.  
From now till dawn let nothing disturb us.  
And for this we call on you, magic Orpheus.  
Come to us, Apollo's protégé.  
Come and, by our window, install yourself,  
at least for our sake only tonight.  
Through the powers and sweetness of your music you  
charmed boulders to encircle you;  
you charmed trees to follow you;  
you charmed your way into perilous  
Hades in quest of your late Eurydice.  
By the same token, magic Orpheus,  
employ your magical, lyrical powers  
to charm away demons from our door;  
to charm away nightmares from our room;  
to charm away evil men from our yard  
that we may have a peaceful sleep tonight.  
But, above all, charm us into sweet dreams.  
And that as we dream sweet dreams,  
there will be no Dudum drum to be drummed  
and no message to be sent from one Dudum  
drum to another.  
Therefore, there will be no resounding  
echoes to be heard from Dudum valleys.

## **16**

A nuptial song composed in the place of  
wedding presents that could never match the beauty of  
the bard's bride. It is hoped that  
the public will take it for what it is:  
a momentary whim in the manner of  
the superior ancient poetic masters.

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**Langa Research and Publishing  
Common Initiative Group  
PO Box 902 Mankon  
Bamenda  
North West Region  
Cameroon**

ISBN 978-9956-616-58-9



9 789956 616589